

sible to speak of weak or inadequate presentations or interpretations in this volume.

In view of its cost the potential buyer and reader must be asking: "Is this book worth the price?" For libraries and serious theological and historical students and scholars there is an unequivocal "yes"! It affords the contemporary Protestant theologian with the kind of identifying knowledge of the most recent "fathers" which Anglo-American thinkers in particular have so often lacked. But the book is even stronger as a tool for historians. It is an important contribution to the theological history of Christian historiography. As a textbook there is really no peer to this one, but its price is hardly competitive. One can only hope for a cheaper, perhaps one-volume edition for classroom use.

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Mediums, and Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900. By HOWARD KERR. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972. x + 261 pp. \$8.95.

Although the title of this book and many of the chapter headings such as "The Epoch of Rapping Spirits", "Knocks for Knocking", and "No Traveler Returns", sound like a press agent's dream, this is a scholarly, extremely well-researched and documented work on American spiritualist writings and their literary response during the period covered. The title of the book is taken from Henry James' *The Bostonians* (London, 1886), and each chapter heading is from a cited nineteenth-century source. Fortunately for the serious reader, each of the eight chapters also has a more descriptive subtitle indicating the general content. For the chapters mentioned above, they are respectively: "American Spiritualism from 1848 to 1860", "Humorous Literary Reactions to Spiritualism," and "William Dean Howells and *The Undiscovered Country*". Others are concerned with spiritualism in occult writings and Mark Twain's pungent comments upon the entire phenomenon.

To say that the contents of this book are well documented from primary sources is almost an understatement. All chapters but the first have more than one-hundred footnotes citing sources ranging from pertinent books and the popular press, to tracts and diaries rarely seen by the average student of American religious history. In addition, there is a bibliography and an index, each eighteen pages in length. But despite this weight of scholarly apparatus, it is a lively and readable volume. It will fascinate students of American religion, literature and satiric humor as well as those interested in the occult and off-beat. It will also no doubt become an essential introduction for those who probe the varieties of American "religious" experience and credulity.

Altogether it is an informative, eminently readable book which should go far in filling a noticeable gap in American literary and social history.

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Religion and the Solid South. Edited by SAMUEL S. HILL, JR. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1972. 208 pp. \$2.95.

The 1969 Duke University symposium, which was the impetus for the six essays making up this book, was concerned with a formidable theme, "religion in the solid South". The contributors refreshingly recognize this study as "a mere beginning" (Hill), see the need of "more reliable current, local data" (Gaustad), and admit that they have "barely scratched the surface" (Thompson). One essayist says that certain comments are "only guesses" (Hudson), and another in-

dicates that "much more work needs to be done" (Scott). Participants in the symposium who contributed to this book, besides co-chairman Samuel S. Hill, Jr., who served as editor, include sociologist Edgar T. Thompson, also a chairman, anthropologist Charles Hudson, historians Ann Firor Scott and Edwin Gaustad.

This study offers an interesting and frequently imaginative, if somewhat speculative, assessment of southern religion. Thompson holds that "religious orthodoxy" lies "at the core of cultural orthodoxy". Hudson sees a close correlation between the fundamentalist "belief-system and the social system in which it exists". Hill's concept of "two cultures—regionality as . . . culture and religiosity as cultural system" is a model worthy of serious exploration. Religious sanctions, he believes, constitute "a conservative or reinforcing agent for the traditional values held by white southern society". Apparently his thesis is that southern "regionality" or "Southernness" affords a particularly propitious occasion for religious sanctions to function in a conservative manner. Belief-systems and lifestyles outside "the solid south" are presumably much less subject to cultural conditioning than those below the Mason and Dixon line. Is this because "a certain divine quality" is attached to "regionality" only in the South?

My only serious caveat is to wonder how the conclusion was reached that "in their seminaries southern Protestants have a rather shallow sense of history and a somewhat undeveloped tradition of theological scholarship". Such a sweeping generalization seems out of place in a study which examines an important aspect of American religion with competence and insight. A few infelicities of style ("to adequately discuss death") and the absence of an index detract only slightly from a book that is a "must" for students of the South. If these essays and the symposium which elicited them help to stimulate more detailed local and regional studies of American religion, especially "folk religion", this book will contribute significantly to a relatively unexplored element in American church history.

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